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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [EU](#) [TU](#) [OSCE](#)

SUBJECT: DRAFT EU PARLIAMENT REPORT CALLS FOR RADICAL
REFORMS IN TURKISH GOVERNANCE

REF: A. EMBASSY (KAPLAN)-EUR/SE (SILVERMAN

[1](#)B. GOLLNER-SWEET

[1](#)C. KERO) 3/27 EMAIL

Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons 1.5 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A clear-sighted but controversial European Parliament draft report calls on the GOT to make fundamental changes to the Kemalist State in order to meet EU membership criteria. MFA and reportedly a few members of the European parliament reject the report as biased; several European Embassy contacts praise its content, but say it will not impact Turkey's EU candidacy. The report provides an incisive, accurate depiction of the basic flaws in Turkey's democracy. End Summary.

Dutch Christian Democrat Submits Draft

[1](#)2. (U) Arie Oostlander, a Dutch Christian Democrat, submitted a controversial draft report on Turkey's EU candidacy March 25 to the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, Human Rights, Common Security and Defense Policy. Oostlander serves as the committee's Turkey rapporteur. The report calls for fundamental changes to the Kemalist State -- including a new Constitution and the elimination of the military-dominated National Security Council in its current form -- and urges the EU actively to engage the GOT in achieving such change.

Report Draws Strong Reactions Pro and Con

[1](#)3. (C) Very few people have seen the draft, which has not been approved by the full Foreign Affairs Committee. However, Oostlander provided a copy to the MFA, which quickly released a statement calling it "subjective" and "unconstructive." Kaan Esener, head of the MFA Council of Europe Department, asserted to us that the report goes too far in criticizing the Turkish State. "It attacks the basic tenets of the Republic," he said. "I understand what they are trying to say, but why be so aggressive?" Esener claimed that the substance and tone of the report reflect what he avers is Oostlander's "anti-Turkey bias." Agreeing, Luigi Narbone, deputy head of the EU office in Ankara (widely considered sluggish and out of touch with reality beyond the bureaucratic beltway), dismissed Oostlander as having "extreme Christian" views and opposing the idea of a Muslim nation in the EU.

[1](#)4. (C) Other European diplomats, however, privately praise the report, even though they don't expect it to influence Turkey's EU candidacy. An Ankara-based Dutch diplomat told us his only complaint about the report is that it comes too late. The EU accepted Turkey as a candidate in 1999, so why did the Parliament wait until 2003 to advocate fundamental change, he griped. A visiting Dutch diplomat noted that the EU has agreed to review Turkey's candidacy at the Summit in December 2004, far too soon to expect the kind of reform Oostlander is calling for. A Danish diplomat called the report "excellent," but noted that parliamentary reports carry far less weight than reports endorsed by the EU-member-state governments. The Dutch diplomats said they have heard that several members of the Foreign Affairs Committee are planning significantly to tone down the report.

Kemalism An Obstacle to Reform

15. (C) Unlike other EU reports on Turkey, Oostlander's draft, e-mailed to EUR/SE March 27, takes direct aim at several fundamental flaws in Turkey's Kemalist system that serve to undermine democratic reform. Highlights include:

-- Turkey's authoritarian Constitution, drafted in 1982 under a military regime, does not form an appropriate legal basis to guarantee the rule of law and fundamental freedoms. The GOT cannot fix the Constitution by amending various articles; it must adopt a new Constitution based on European democratic principles.

-- Kemalism, the underlying philosophy of the Turkish State, implies: 1) an exaggerated fear of the undermining of the integrity of the State; 2) an emphasis on the homogeneity of Turkish culture; 3) an important role for the military in governance; and 4) a very rigid attitude toward religion. Kemalism, therefore, constitutes a barrier to EU membership. -- Turkish citizens attribute greater importance to the military than to other state institutions, including Parliament. It will be necessary in the long term to abolish the military-dominated National Security Council in its current form.

-- Military representatives should be withdrawn from civilian bodies, such as the high councils on education and media, to ensure these bodies' independence. Parliament should establish control over the military budget as part of the national budget.

-- In order to make Turkish society more democratic, the GOT should pass legislation to encourage the establishment of social organizations in the economic, social, and cultural fields.

-- Turkey must decentralize certain elements of government to allow citizens more input into decision-making.

-- While the Central and Eastern European EU candidate countries enthusiastically dismantled their totalitarian structures, Turkey has vacillated.

EU Should Actively Engage GOT

16. (U) The report also calls on the EU to adopt "an immediate and radical approach" actively to assist Turkey in making the necessary reforms to meet EU membership criteria. Rather than observing passively and overlooking fundamental issues, Oostlander argues, the EU should state clearly where the problems lie and work with the GOT to address them. The report further states: "It cannot be ruled out that Turkey will ultimately regard such a thorough-going reform as unsustainable in itself, or as not in its interests. The slow rate of implementation of the reforms seems to point in this direction. However, if we assume that Turkey can in fact become a full member of the EU, we must not leave any scope in the pre-accession process for attempts to evade central political decisions."

Comment

17. (C) This report is controversial not because it is off the mark, but because it is dead on. Oostlander is bluntly telling the GOT what many Turks and Turkey watchers know but don't want to say publicly: that while Kemalism gave republican Turkey a start, it has long impeded further progress toward Western democracy. In encouraging active EU participation in helping Turkey make breakthrough reforms, the report underscores the importance of not losing sight of the true nature of Turkish "democracy." In addition, many of the Turkish characteristics illustrated here -- exaggerated fear of outsiders and internal "minorities", conflicts over religion, military interference in governance -- bedevil U.S. and EU negotiations with the GOT across the board.
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